

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 191300Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 855

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRAGUE 2380

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, CZ

SUBJECT: EMBASSY PROTESTS RUDE PRAVO ARTICLE ATTACKING SECRETARY

REF: STATE 202001

1. WE WERE UNABLE TO ARRANGE APPOINTMENT WITH ZANTOVSKY UNTIL AUGUST 18, WHEN CHARGE DELIVERED PROTEST RE AUGUST 7 RUDE PRAVO ARTICLE PER REFTEL. CHARGE EMPHASIZED:

(1) DEPARTMENT FOUND VERY DISTURBING RUDE PRAVO'S PERSONAL ATTACK ON THE SECRETARY, ESPECIALLY THE ALLUSIONS TO LYING;

(2) THE SECRETARY AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAD NO ROLE WHATEVER IN PREPARING OR ENCOURAGING FROLIK AND AUGUST TO TESTIFY BEFORE SENATE INTERNAL SECURITY SUB-COMMITTEE;

(3) MFA MUST BE WELL AWARE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS NO CONTROL OVER CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES; AND (4) USG REGARDS THIS PERSONAL ATTACK ON THE SECRETARY AND DELIBERATELY MISLEADING CZECHOSLOVAK JOURNALISM TO BE INCONSISTENT WITH PROFESSED DESIRE OF PRESIDENT HUSAK AND OTHER GOC LEADERS TO IMPROVE BILATERAL ATMOSPHERE. CHARGE NOTED WITH REGRET THE ALMOST COLD WAR CHARACTER OF ANTI-US ARTICLES APPEARING DAILY IN CZECHOSLOVAK OFFICIAL PARTY AND STATE JOURNALS.

2. ZANTOVSKY TOOK NOTES ON FOUR POINTS OF OUR
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PROTEST. INTERESTINGLY, HE EXPLICITLY "ACCEPTED"

PROTST. THEN, HE EXPRESSED PERSONAL VIEW THAT VITRIOLIC PRESS ARTICLES WERE NOT HELPFUL TO EITHER SIDE. HE REAFFIRMED DESIRE OF MFA TO HONOR GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARTMAN TO AVOID DELIVERATE STUMULATION OF PRESS ATTACKS ON ONE ANOTHER. HE ARGUED; HOWEVER, THAT MFA COULD NO MORE CONTROL WHAT RUDE PRAVO JOURNALISTS WRITE THAN STATE DEPARTMENT CAN CONTROL JOURNALISTS OF WASHINGTON POST. HE SAW VICIOUS CIRCLE INVOLVING PRESS ATTACKS BY ONE SIDE AND COUNTERATTACKS BY THE OTHER, WITH BILATERAL POLITICAL RELATIONS INEVITABLY STRAINED AS A RESULT. ZANTOVSKY SAID HE HAD LONG THOUGHT THAT ONLY WAY TO BREAK THIS CIRCLE WOULD BE THROUGH PROGRESS IN RESOLVING PRACTICAL PROBLEMS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS -- PROGRESS WHICH COULD TURN PRESS REPORTAGE AROUND. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE CONSIDERED NOVOTNY'S ACTION PROPER IN PROTESTING ALLEGATIONS IN WASHINGTON IMPUGNING AMBASSADOR JOHANES (PRAGUE 2264).

3. ZANTOVSKY HOPED PROTESTS AND COUNTER PROTESTS OVER STATEMENTS BY FROLIK AND AUGUST WERE "FINISHED" SO THAT BOTH SIDES COULD GET ON WITH TANGIBLE STEPS TOWARD BETTER RELATIONS. ASKED ABOUT STATUS OF GOC CONSIDERATION OF US NOTE RE ELIMINATION OF CLOSED ZONES, HE SAID MFA LAWYERS WERE PRESENTLY STUDYING THE MATTER CLOSELY; HE COULD ONLY ANTICIPATE GOC REPLY "SOON. LOOKING AHEAD, HE WAS ALSO HOPEFUL OF FURTHER PROGRESS IN COMING WEEKS IN NEGOTIATIONS ON CULTURAL/EDUCATIONAL/SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGES AGREEMENT AND OTHER BILATERAL DEVELOPMENTS.

4. CHARGE SAID EMBASSY WAS READY TO DO ITS PART IN EFFORT TO INTRODUCE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENTS IN US-CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS, BUT CONSTANT STREAM OF ANTI-US ARTICLES IN CZECHOSLOVAK PRESS WOULD NOT HELP A BIT.
FROWICK

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